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NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

NOTE ON ARISTOTLE'S *DE ANIMA* 405a 3

ἐπομένως δὲ τούτοις καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀποδιδάσσων. τό τε γὰρ κινητικὸν τὴν φύσιν τῶν πρώτων ὑπειλήφασιν, οὐκ ἀλόγως. ὅθεν ἔδοξε τισι πῦρ εἶναι. This passage has been the subject of much discussion. Busse renders it, adding with Essen καὶ τὸ γνωστικόν: “Da sie als das Wesen der ersten Dinge, nicht ohne guten Grund, die Bewegungsfähigkeit und die Denkkraft betrachteten.” Hicks, following Bonitz, bids us “join τῶν πρώτων which is a partitive genitive with τὸ κινητικόν and supply after ὑπειλήφασιν, τὴν ψυχὴν or τὴν ψυχὴν εἶναι.” By τὸ κινητικὸν τὴν φύσιν τῶν πρώτων is meant, he says, ἐκεῖνο τῶν πρώτων ὃ ἔστι κινητικὸν τὴν φύσιν. He translates: “For they have assumed, not unnaturally, that the soul is that primary cause which in its own nature is capable of producing motion.”

These and other interpretations which I have seen seem to me to strain normal Greek idiom and to yield an unsatisfactory sense. I think the clue to the true meaning is given by the *locus classicus* on *φύσις* in Plato's *Laws* 892 B. Materialists, Plato tells us, claim the good words “prior” and “nature” for matter, and treat soul and all its works as secondary developments and products of art or artifice. This he refutes by showing that priority belongs to soul as the principle of motion. Soul, then, is not only prior or first, but it is far more truly “nature” than the material elements for which these thinkers usurp the name. For—φύσιν βούλονται λέγειν γένεσιν τὴν περὶ τὰ πρῶτα· εἰ δὲ φανήσεται ψυχὴ πρῶτον, οὐ πῦρ οὐδὲ ἄληρ, ψυχὴ δὲν πρώτους γεγενημένη, σχεδὸν ὀρθότατα λέγοιτ’ ἀν εἶναι διαφερόντως φύσει.

Aristotle, as is his way, borrows a Platonic thought to rationalize the mental processes of the pre-Socratics. τὸ κινητικόν in our context does not mean the abstract principle of motion, and there is no contradiction between this passage and *Met.* 984 b 1, where Aristotle denies that the pre-Socratics had attained any clear conception of his motor cause. τὸ κινητικόν here is practically a paraphrastic description of soul. But it does not imply either that the pre-Socratics recognized Aristotle's motor cause or accepted Plato's doctrine of soul as the only self-moving entity. It merely expresses that obvious popular association of life or soul with motion to which the *De anima* frequently refers and which Spencer's psychology discusses as one of the earliest of primitive generalizations. The pre-Socratics, of course, thought of the soul as something that moves, and so identified it with that one of the material elements which was most closely associated with motion. Thus the soul from their point of view as explained by Aristotle becomes, in spite of Plato, both *φύσις* and *φύσις τῶν πρώτων* and yet remains material.

I would construe then: "For a [the] movent thing [which the soul of which we are speaking manifestly appeared to be] they conceived to be [of] the nature of first things—not without plausible reason. Whence some thought it to be fire." I do not myself think this construction in the context strained. But any harshness that others may feel in it is, I believe, amply justified by the allusion to Plato's γένεσιν τὴν περὶ τὰ πρῶτα and his insistence that soul and not matter has a right to the predicate φύσις. The τε need not trouble us. Two MSS omit it. If it is retained we may perhaps adopt Mr. Hicks's suggestion that it should be added to the passages where τε γάρ equals *etenim*.

Nothing is more characteristic of Aristotle than the use of Platonic distinctions for the relative justification of earlier thinkers against Plato's criticism even when at bottom he agrees with Plato rather than with them. Compare, for example, the entire treatment of ἡδονή in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Finally, Themistius' paraphrase seems to support the interpretation here proposed. Themistius says: οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅστις τὸ κινεῖν τῆς ψυχῆς σύμφυτον δίναμιν ἴπενόησαν, εἰκότως καὶ οὗτοι συγγενῆ ταῖς ἀρχαῖς αὐτὴν ἀποφαίνονται· εἴλογον γάρ καὶ λίαν πιθανὸν τὴν κινητικωτάτην αἰτίαν ἐν ταῖς πρώταις ἀρχαῖς κατατάττειν, ὅθεν ἔδοξέ τισιν ἐκ πυρὸς εἶναι μάλιστα ἡ ψυχή. This seems to imply the assumption of my interpretation that τὸ κινητικόν refers directly to soul as the subject of discourse.

PAUL SHOREY

EXECUTION OF A VESTAL AND RITUAL MARRIAGE

When I was an undergraduate, the Sun-myth explanation of well-nigh all mythology and ritual had fairly run its course among the really learned, but its influences still held sway over our young enthusiasts who were just beginning to find in folk-lore something more charming than mere stories. When we finally learned to distrust the splendor of the Sun-myth as a universal illuminant, we turned to Herr Mannhardt, and then to Mr. Frazer, and derived new courage from the Corn-spirit. This all-powerful deity appears now to rule supreme. But to a layman in such abstrusities there seems danger lest the passion for comparison, for the detection of analogies, for uniform ritual interpretation of all possible human action, may be carried over into the realm of improbability and even of absurdity. I would not for a moment be understood to blaspheme against the Corn-spirit. On the contrary, I bow myself before him. Nor would I speak otherwise than most respectfully and gratefully of the diligence and ingenuity that have collected and are collecting masses of apparently cognate material from the traditions of vanished or vanishing peoples. I would merely ask with diffidence whether the Corn-spirit is not occasionally worked overtime nowadays, somewhat as the much-enduring Sun was a generation or two ago.